

July 17, 2008

The Honorable Adrian Fenty  
Executive Office of the Mayor  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 316  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor Fenty,

We are writing you a public letter to express our alarm at the FY2009 DCPS local school budgets. As you well know, we are longtime public education advocates working for systemic change in our DCPS schools so they support excellent education for ALL students. With the support of school finance expert Mary Levy of the Washington Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights we have analyzed the local school budgets and staffing plans as posted on May 2nd for the 2008-2009 school year. A full report is attached. The increased overall funding to local schools was welcome news. Our concerns lie with the inequities created with the new budget and staff allocation model that replaced the Weighted Student Formula. Some of the key findings that are cause for alarm are:

### **Local School Budget Allocations**

- Elementary, PK-8 and high schools with a high levels of students from low-income families will have less local funding per student and larger class sizes than schools with the fewest number of students from low-income families—this at a level far greater than in previous years.
  - For example: Garrison Elementary with (77% low income students) is funded at \$6,064 dollars per student with an average class size of about 30 students per teacher whereas Stoddert Elementary (23% low income students) is funded at \$8,025 dollars per student with an average class size of about 23 students per teacher.
- The ten high schools in restructuring under NCLB have been allocated far less local money per pupil than the four selective admissions high schools—this at a level far greater than in previous years.
  - For example: Anacostia High School, a comprehensive high school in restructuring has been allocated \$6,210 per student, whereas School without Walls, a city-wide specialty school accessed by application, has been allocated \$9,334 dollars per student.

### **Staff Allocation Model**

- Classroom teachers are allocated by adherence to the new model in only 24% of all schools. Half the schools (63) have fewer classroom teachers, and 23 have 2 or more teachers more than the model calls for.
- Assignments of the staff other than classroom teachers are so inflexible as to unnecessarily deprive schools of staff necessary to run existing successful programs, such as science and foreign language at the elementary level, elementary counselors, deans of students, academy directors, middle school attendance officers, and technology and clerical support at the secondary level.
- Half of the schools needing teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) are allocated fewer teachers than required by the DCPS compliance agreement with the U.S. Department of Education.
- Custodians are assigned on the basis of enrollment, with a minimum of 3 per building, resulting in per custodian coverage of as little as 5,500 square feet and as much as 37,000 square feet of school floor space.

We have communicated these concerns to DCPS several times in writing and in conversation since early May, and in a letter dated June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2008 from SHAPPE, concerning the high schools. To date these inequities and shortcomings of the new system have not been resolved. DCPS struggled with inequities under the Weighted Student Formula, but in the current effort to make staffing equal at all schools, the evidence we have shows that DCPS has created greater funding inequities than before.

In order to ensure that DCPS does not further disadvantage children who are already disadvantaged and to begin to address these issues we recommend:

- Increase funds to low-income schools with the greatest need, without pulling resources from other schools.
- Use the staffing model to permit the hiring of teachers and other personnel at schools where they are short personnel under the model.
- Retain local school influence over budgets and staffing and permit increased flexibility in the staffing model to allow local schools to meet individualized needs within their budget allocation.
- Bring the staffing of ESL teachers into compliance with the federal compliance agreement.
- Assign custodial staff based on building size as well as enrollment.
- Assess the staffing model for special education programs and services.
- Establish an ongoing working group of DCPS central office officials, budget analysts and local school and community representatives who begin now to evaluate the model, address inequities, and field test any changes for next year.

We are available to work with you to resolve these problems before the start of the new school year. We respectfully request a meeting with you to discuss our findings and recommendations.

Sincerely Yours,

Iris Toyer, Chair  
Parents United for the DC Public Schools  
(202) 319-1000 ext 117  
[iris\\_toyer@washlaw.org](mailto:iris_toyer@washlaw.org)

Mary Levy, Director,  
Public Education Reform Project  
Washington Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights  
(202) 319-1000 ext. 115  
[mary\\_levy@washlaw.org](mailto:mary_levy@washlaw.org)

Margot Berkey, Director  
Parents United for the DC Public Schools  
(202) 232-1810  
[margotdc@gmail.com](mailto:margotdc@gmail.com)

Mary Filardo, Executive Director  
21<sup>st</sup> Century School Fund  
(202) 745-3745 ext. 11  
[mfilardo@21csf.org](mailto:mfilardo@21csf.org)

Cathy Reilly, Director  
Senior High Alliance of Parents, Principals and  
Educators (S.H.A.P.P.E.)  
(202) 723-3310  
[cathy.p.reilly@verizon.net](mailto:cathy.p.reilly@verizon.net)

Nancy Huvendick, DC Program Director  
21<sup>st</sup> Century School Fund  
(202) 745-3745 ext. 15  
[nhuvendick@21csf.org](mailto:nhuvendick@21csf.org)

cc: Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia  
Members, Council of the District of Columbia  
Chancellor, DC Public Schools  
Deputy Mayor for Education  
State Superintendent of Education  
Members, State Board of Education

attachments: Report of Key Findings  
Appendix Tables